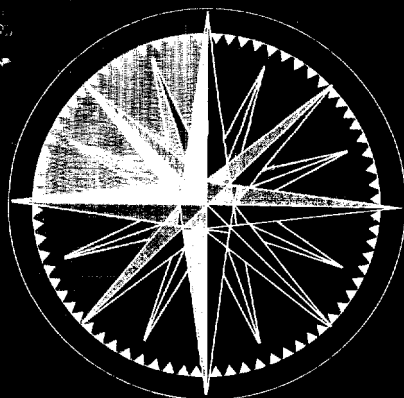


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se 2006/11/08 : CIA-RDP79-00927A004200080004-6

25 October 1963

OCI No. 0303/63C

Copy No. 75

SPECIAL REPORT

YEMENI EFFORTS TOWARD SELF-GOVERNMENT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

MORI/CDF Pages 2-7

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YEMENI EFFORTS TOWARD SELF-GOVERNMENT

The council of sheikhs and tribal notables that recently met at Uman appears to have marked the first serious attempt by the Yemenis to reconstitute their society since the disruption wrought by the September 1962 revolution. The overthrow of the Imam removed the tribal hierarchy that for some ten centuries had exercised all effective governmental authority in Yemen. The Egyptians, on becoming involved in the civil war last year, found themselves compelled to fill the vacuum and provide essential governmental services. The growing Egyptian involvement in Yemen has offended even antiroyalist tribes, and is stimulating a search by the tribes to find their own answer to the problems of governing their country.

The Imam's Role

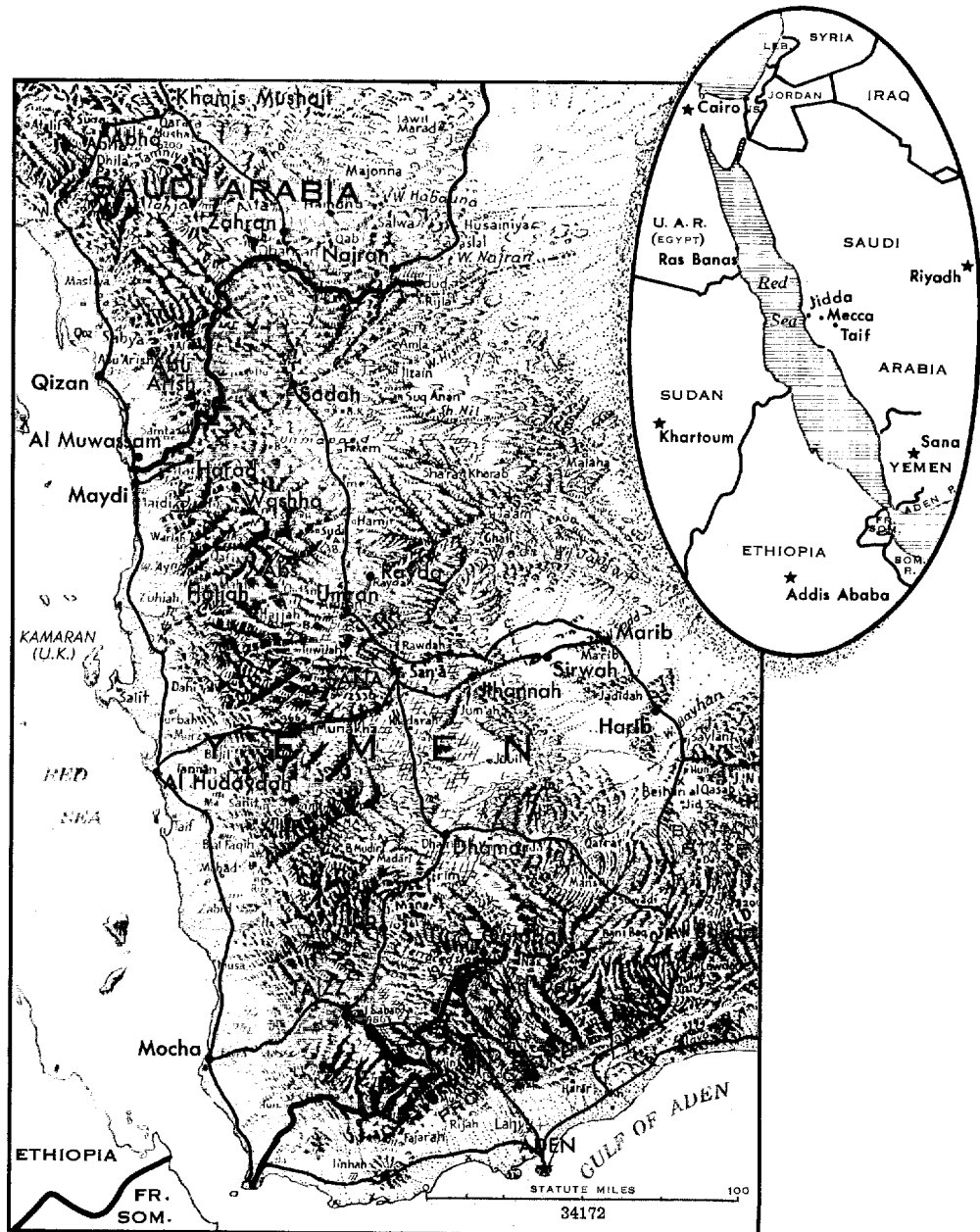
Under the Imamate, which dated from the 9th century, Yemen was dominated by the warlike Zaidi tribes that inhabit the northern and central highlands. The Imam was the spiritual head of the Zaidi tribes, who adhere to Islam's major Shia sect. Although he was primarily a religious figure, it was generally accepted that as long as he did not openly flout the basic premises of Islam his word was law. He determined all matters of state.

Seldom was an Imam in absolute control throughout Yemen. He was generally able to maintain his authority over the tribes in the north through a system of alliances and counter-alliances--abetted by subsidies and bribes. He also held hostages--sons and sometimes younger brothers of sheikhs--in his citadel in Taizz as assurance of the obedience of their families.

Theoretically the Imamate was elective, with the candidates coming from the Sayyid hierarchy of the Zaidi tribes. The attempt by the last two Imams--the Hamid al-Dins--to introduce primogeniture alienated some of the Zaidi tribes from the Hamid al-Din family. When the revolt occurred, therefore, many Zaidi tribes either declared for the new regime or remained neutral.

The Zaidi Imamate was never popular among the Shafi tribes in the southern and coastal regions. The Shafi, who are Sunni (orthodox) Moslems, have long resented Zaidi dominance, and were the main supporters of the revolution against the Imam. There have been reports that the Shafis are becoming increasingly disenchanted with the new regime as Zaidi elements have extended control over it.

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Elimination of Oligarchy

The revolution effectively destroyed the Sayyid oligarchy, which claimed to be descended from the Prophet Mohammed and provided cohesion within the country. Under the Imamate, prominent members of the Sayyid served in official capacities, such as advisers to the Imam or as his viceroys and district chiefs throughout the country. They supervised the collection of taxes, controlled access to the Imam, and served in most other positions from which the people were required to seek approval for almost any activity.

The Yemeni people in their daily relationship with the government, therefore, encountered primarily the Sayyid and it was against them that the principal wrath of the revolution was directed. The entire Sayyid officialdom was driven from office. Some 30 prominent figures were executed, and many more were imprisoned. So far the revolution has not provided a substitute.

Egyptian Involvement

The Egyptian involvement in Yemen has had far-reaching consequences. Originally Cairo thought the revolution could be secured with relatively few troops. However, as the civil war expanded, not only were the Egyptians forced to commit larger numbers of troops, but they found it necessary to deal with a whole variety of nonmilitary problems. Because of a complete lack of developed wealth--even basic fi-

nancial institutions--and an almost total absence of human skills, the new republic has barely been able to cope with the most urgent problems of government. The Egyptians have had to provide considerable financial aid, as well as all essential services, including minting a Yemeni coinage.

With ultimate authority in the hands of the Egyptian military command, the Egyptians' involvement has not been at all popular among the xenophobic Yemeni tribes--even the anti-royalist ones. Tribes have been particularly frustrated by the lack of local autonomy, for even under the Imam's theoretically absolute rule most problems were in fact handled on the local level. The failure of the Egyptians to make substantial progress toward ending the civil war has intensified the animosities.

Search for a Solution

It is becoming increasingly clear to the Yemenis that the only way of ending the present chaotic situation lies in a realignment of the tribal forces. President Sallal has clearly failed to fill the need for a leader or leaders who, while republican in sentiment and friendly to Egypt, are acceptable to the overwhelming majority of the traditional tribal leaders. Sallal was brought into the revolutionary leadership only at the last minute, reportedly because he had the keys to the ammunition stores.

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His inadequacy has become more and more apparent as the civil war has dragged on.

The only figures in the revolutionary regime that have a tribal following have been placed in posts abroad or in minor positions because of Egyptian concern over their Baathist leanings.

Nor does the army appear capable of providing leadership for the country. At the time of the revolution, the army fell apart along tribal lines. The Egyptians have tried to rebuild it, and now are reportedly sending Yemeni troops to Egypt for training under conditions more subject to control. Some 20,000 - 30,000 Yemenis may eventually be sent.

In early September some 3,000 sheikhs and tribal notables convened at Umrán with the Egyptians' approval in an attempt to come to grips with the task of reconstituting their society. Some 29 resolutions were passed. They up-

held the revolution but were critical of Sallal and called for a broadening of their republican government. They also called for the establishment of a tribal army which the council clearly hoped would replace the Egyptian forces. The council also demanded a withdrawal of Egyptian troops from noncombatant areas.

The Egyptians, although concerned over the growing chaos, only partially accepted the resolutions. They permitted the addition of two vice presidents to the republican government, one of whom was a leader of the conference. Despite the anti-Egyptian tone of some of the resolutions, no retaliatory action has been taken. Cairo appears unwilling to go further mainly out of concern that several influential figures in the council meeting had Baathist leanings, and that complete acceptance might encourage such elements, although presently weak, to expand their influence in Yemen. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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